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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BASRAH 000110

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: PROVINCIAL ELECTION IN BASRAH LIKELY TO BE WAR BETWEEN THE  
5'S

REF: A) BASRAH 001

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CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, Regional Coordinator, REO Basrah,  
Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b)

11. (C) Summary: In meetings on June 15 and June 19, Hazim Joda, the branch manager for the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI), and Osama Khalil, the Basrah IECI media manager, gave Basrah Regional Embassy Office (REO) Poloff an overview of issues in the pre-provincial election season in Basrah. Both officials said that they expected the provincial election in Basrah to be particularly competitive and contentious, as the different political parties that make up the Unified Iraqi Coalition (UIC)- List 555- compete for power against each other. Security in Basrah has degraded considerably since the December 15 election and is likely to be much more of an issue in the provincial election. The issue of out-of-province voting for Iraqis displaced by sectarian violence was identified as a growing concern. End Summary.

List 555: Each 5 For Himself  
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12. (C) In meetings on June 15 and June 19, Hazim Joda, the Basrah IECI branch manager, and Osama Khalil, the Basrah IECI media manager, gave an overview of issues leading up to the provincial election season in Basrah. Neither Hazim nor Osama speculated about when they thought the provincial election would take place, but both said that they were aware the issue was currently under discussion in parliament. Those parties currently in power were pushing for a later provincial election date, they said, while those parties that would likely gain seats were pushing for an early election.

13. (C) Osama and Hazim said they believed that Fadhila would separate from the rest of the Unified Iraqi Coalition (UIC) List 555 for the provincial election. Osama also said that it was possible that the two Da'awa parties and the Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS) might separate from the UIC 555. (Note: In such a scenario, Da'awa and Da'awa Tanzim would remain allied. End Note.) Both Osama and Hazim said, however, that other lists' parties, such as those in Iraqi National Accord (INA) 731 List and Basrah Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) 618 List, were waiting to see what would happen to the UIC 555 before deciding whether or not to withdraw from their Lists. If OMS withdrew from UIC 555, for example, then 731 parties would be more likely to remain on their list to improve their chances of winning more votes. (Comment: One REO contact said that in the provincial election, we would see the complete breakdown of the UIC 555 List. "It will be each 5 for himself." End Comment.)

14. (C) Osama and Hazim both said that they maintained open communication with IIP party members. The Sunni party had been disappointed with the outcome of the December 15 election, but they had also admitted to the IECI that they had not chosen their political candidates wisely and had therefore lost votes to the 731 List, which had included a former Ba'athist party on it (reftel). Because the Sunni parties had lodged so many complaints after the December 15 election, Osama said that the IECI planned to welcome as many Sunni election observers as possible in the future provincial election.

#### Security in Basrah a Major Concern

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15. (C) Both Hazim and Osama voiced concern about the security situation in Basrah and how deteriorating conditions might adversely affect the provincial election. Osama voiced private concern that the targeting of Sunnis in Basrah for assassinations, as well as the attack on the IIP headquarters in Basrah following the February 22 Golden Mosque attack, would adversely impact the elections. Both Hazim and Osama expressed concern that the Sunni IIP headquarters was still closed in Basrah because it would affect the party's ability to organize and participate in the provincial election. Hazim stated that, "2003 was better than 2004, and now 2005 is proving to be better than 2006."

16. (C) Both IECI officials remarked that the provincial election in Basrah would be especially competitive and contentious because the political parties comprising the UIC 555 will compete against each other instead of cooperating with each other as they did in the December 15 parliamentary election. The December 15 election had not been particularly divisive in Basrah, Hazim pointed out, and the UIC 555 won 13 out of 16 national assembly seats. Largely because of the lack of controversy, the December 15 election had taken place in an atmosphere of peace, with relatively few incidents of fraud or security issues. This would not be the case during the provincial election, in his view, and he foresaw a greater risk

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for security incidents in the lead-up to the provincial election in Basrah, as well as more allegations of fraud and voting irregularities by the political parties.

#### Getting out the Vote

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17. (C) Osama said that he was focusing on launching an effective public education campaign in Basrah in order to improve voter turnout. He said that he was worried that too many people were becoming apathetic about voting. As media manager, he saw it as his specific duty to "get out the vote," and was working closely with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and other non-governmental organizations to do so. He specifically identified women voters as a target audience, saying that women made up over half the population but were historically underrepresented in voter turnout. He said he was trying to brainstorm possibilities to encourage women to educate themselves about voting so that they would be less susceptible to pressure from family members and religious leaders on how to vote.

#### Where and How Do IDPs Vote?

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18. (C) Osama identified voting for internally displaced people (IDPs) in Basrah as an issue of concern. Many Shia families have moved into the Basrah area from other provinces in Iraq, and these individuals will face difficulty in being able to vote in the provincial election. These families are too frightened to return to their home provinces to vote. (Comment: During the June 19 meeting, Hazim downplayed the issue, saying that he believed the IDP problem in Basrah was blown out of proportion by the media. Hazim was not present at the June 15 meeting. End Comment.)

¶9. (C) When asked if the IECI could coordinate with the Ministry of Displacement and Migration to facilitate voting for displaced families, Osama replied that this would be possible. He suggested that displaced families be allowed to pre-register in the 40 days leading up to the provincial election in their new province of residence with the "Number 91 Form." He admitted that this might tax IECI logistical capabilities because, from past experience, he knew that most people waited until the last few days before the election to pre-register. He said the IECI had no plans at the moment to allow for absentee or out-of-province voting. (Comment: Allowing IDPs to vote in their new places of residence would solve the issue of them voting. However, it would not enable them to vote for the local government in their places of habitual residence, which would pose other problems. In addition, the influx of Shia into Basrah and the flows of Sunnis out of Basrah may skew the results of the provincial election if IDPs are not able to affect the vote in their places of habitual residence. End Comment.)

¶9. (C) Comment: The outcome of the December 15 election in Basrah was largely a foregone conclusion, as the political scene in Basrah was, and continues to be, dominated by the Fadhila, Da'awa, SCIRI, and Basrah Islamic List parties. This will not be the case in the provincial election, because each of these Islamic political parties will attempt to gain as much control on the provincial council as possible. The likelihood of intense political battles, coupled with the unstable security environment in Basrah, indicates that the provincial election in Basrah has the potential to take place in a significantly different atmosphere than the December 15 election and give rise to increased violence.

¶10. (C) Comment continued: Despite Hazim's efforts to minimize of the problem of IDPs in Basrah, it has the potential to explode in the polling stations during the run-up to the election because the issue concerns sectarianism between Sunnis and Shia. In any case, the issue of out-of-province voting must be resolved on a general level so that Iraqis who are temporarily displaced from their provinces of habitual residence have the opportunity to affect political change in their home provinces. End comment.

¶11. (C) BIONOTE: Hazim Hammed Joda al-Rubaei was born in 1954 in Basrah. He became the manager of the Basrah branch of the IECI in December 2005. Prior to that, he was the deputy IECI manager from October to December 2005. He is not affiliated with any of the political parties. He obtained a B.S. in mechanical engineering from the University of Basrah in 1978 and spent the following sixteen years working in the Ministry of Transportation as an engineer. In 1994, he fled to Jordan, where he worked in a transport company. In 1996, he moved to the United Arab Emirates where he worked in the Muftan Company until he returned to Basrah in 1998. He speaks fluent English.

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He is married and has three children.

12 (C) BIONOTE: Osama Khalil Ibrahim was born in 1965 in Basrah. He obtained a B.S. in political science from the Shatt Al Arab University in Basrah and is currently working on his M.S. in political science at the same university. He does not speak English. He is married.  
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